

## Chapter 13

# ESAP Students' Perceptions of Skills Learning in Computer-Mediated Intercultural Collaboration

**Rachel Lindner**  
*Munich University, Germany*

### ABSTRACT

*Reports on computer-mediated intercultural exchanges generally focus on their relevance for acquiring linguistic or intercultural competence, but little research exists on other educational outcomes, such as the development of electronic literacies, academic literacies, or study skills. This article uses a multiliteracies approach to telecollaboration, viewing it as an opportunity to develop different skills sets considered important for studying in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The discussion is positioned within the field of English for Specific Academic Purposes and describes an online exchange between Sociology students at the universities of Munich (Germany) and Ljubljana (Slovenia). Qualitative research is used to surface participants' perceptions of skills learning through the exchange and provide insights into the competences that these learning environments facilitate.*

### INTRODUCTION

Computer-mediated interaction between culturally and linguistically diverse groups, commonly referred to in TESOL literature as telecollaboration, has in the past fifteen years largely focused

on online exchanges between non-native and native speakers of English aimed at enhancing the linguistic and intercultural competence (IC) of the participating foreign language learners (Belz, 2003). More recently there has been a move towards a “Telecollaboration 2.0” (Guth & Helm, 2010), a multiliteracies approach that, building on the linguistic and intercultural goals that have

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-1855-8.ch013

previously underpinned telecollaboration, places more emphasis on the computer-mediated aspect of communication and associated literacies considered important for studying in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as described, for example, by Jenkins (2008), Johnson et al. (2010), Lankshear and Knobel (2007) and Schetzer and Warschauer (2000).

The small-scale research project described in this article resonates with the conceptual shift in telecollaboration described above. The discussion is positioned within the field of English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) and reports on a four-week online exchange between Sociology students at the universities of Munich (Germany) and Ljubljana (Slovenia) in which English was used as a lingua franca. As the ESAP practitioner and teacher of the German participants, the main aim of the qualitative research I conducted was to gain a better understanding of the potential of computer-mediated intercultural activity for developing different skills sets for the ESAP classroom.

Section two of the article reviews key literature from the field of E(S)AP and telecollaboration, showing a convergence of interests between these areas of language learning. In the third section I describe the exchange and the qualitative research conducted to find out about students' perceptions of skills learning through it. Section four presents key research findings and is followed in section five by a brief concluding discussion of possible implications for future online exchanges between ESAP students.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### **EAP<sup>1</sup> and Literacies for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

Today's students are exposed daily to the demands of acquiring discipline-specific competence and transferable skills required for success in an internationalised academic landscape in which English is widely used as a lingua franca (Graddol, 2006;

Coleman, 2006; Alexander, 2008). Beyond university, students have to meet the expectations of employers who want work-ready graduates with technical and communication skills for performing effectively in a networked, globalised workplace. In the field of EAP these developments have given rise to questions of methodology and content as practitioners reassess their pedagogy in ways that appropriately address students' changing learning needs. For example, generic study skills, such as note-taking, summarising and critical text analysis, have long been a standard component of EAP (Hyland, 2006; Jordan, 1997), but they assume a new dimension that requires a "complexified view of literacy" (Kern, 2006, p. 195) when students venture beyond the print-based texts of their reading lists and into the multi-media open space of the web. Electronic literacies that build on the cognitive and metacognitive strategies of old study skills are required to access, navigate, filter and exploit net resources, as well as critically assess their provenance, genre and sociocultural positioning. As such, it is argued, they deserve a place in EAP courses (Slaouti, 2002; Toledo, 2006).

Electronic literacies are also pertinent in an academic literacies approach to EAP that views learning as a process of acculturation into an academic community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991), and a role for EAP in helping students acquire competences that enable them to participate in their respective communities (Hyland, 2006, p. 19). Warschauer (2002) suggests using CMC to scaffold students' entry into the world of academic discourse beyond the walls of the EAP classroom. He describes a writing class in which students completed tasks via in-class CMC and by researching and participating in public academic mailing lists. The experience gave students "better access to the tools needed for success in academic discourse" and an opportunity "to put the tools to immediate effect in writing about their own experiences, questions, thoughts and concerns ... enhancing students' opportunities to think

17 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:  
[www.igi-global.com/chapter/esap-students-perceptions-skills-learning/67470](http://www.igi-global.com/chapter/esap-students-perceptions-skills-learning/67470)

## Related Content

---

### An Overview of EFL Teachers' Individual Differences in CALL

Samaneh Yadollahi (2015). *Handbook of Research on Individual Differences in Computer-Assisted Language Learning* (pp. 46-69).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/an-overview-of-efl-teachers-individual-differences-in-call/134608](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/an-overview-of-efl-teachers-individual-differences-in-call/134608)

### Combining the Body and Mobile Technology to Teach English Pronunciation

Felicia Zhang (2012). *Computer-Enhanced and Mobile-Assisted Language Learning: Emerging Issues and Trends* (pp. 202-219).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/combining-body-mobile-technology-teach/58776](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/combining-body-mobile-technology-teach/58776)

### Attitudes to the Use of Artificial Intelligence in Language Learning: The Case of Chatbots in Saudi Arabia

Ali Alsaawi, Mohammad Almoaily, Fahad Almulhim, Nesreen Alahmadi and Hamza Alshenqeeti (2025). *International Journal of Computer-Assisted Language Learning and Teaching* (pp. 1-17).

[www.irma-international.org/article/attitudes-to-the-use-of-artificial-intelligence-in-language-learning/376344](http://www.irma-international.org/article/attitudes-to-the-use-of-artificial-intelligence-in-language-learning/376344)

### ChatGPT vs Teacher Roles in Developing EFL Writing

Sirin Sawangwan (2024). *International Journal of Computer-Assisted Language Learning and Teaching* (pp. 1-21).

[www.irma-international.org/article/chatgpt-vs-teacher-roles-in-developing-efl-writing/361235](http://www.irma-international.org/article/chatgpt-vs-teacher-roles-in-developing-efl-writing/361235)

### Local Norms in CALL Language Practice

Jonathan R. White (2016). *International Journal of Computer-Assisted Language Learning and Teaching* (pp. 40-54).

[www.irma-international.org/article/local-norms-in-call-language-practice/143686](http://www.irma-international.org/article/local-norms-in-call-language-practice/143686)